

Contract #: _____

Date Visited: _____

Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Habitat Contract Monitoring Form:

1) Landowner Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

2) Project Type(s): _____

3) Project site sufficiently signed with contact information? NO ☐ YES ☐

If NO, install signs at visible entry points and/or ***write appropriate contact information on signs.***

Number of signs you installed and/or wrote contact information on: _____

4) Contract Compliance

Possible Compliance Issue (place an X in appropriate blank)? NO ☐ MAYBE ☐

If MAYBE, explain: _____

5) Project-specific information (see instructions): _____

6) Project quality evaluation (see instructions): _____

(6a) Overall Project Rating

Project rating for: _____

Ranking Score: _____

Project rating for: _____

Ranking Score: _____

Project rating for: _____

Ranking Score: _____

Project rating for: _____

Ranking Score: _____

SCORES

(A) Project significantly enhances UGB habitat or contributes significantly towards all components necessary for productive UGB habitat.

(B) Project offers fair to moderate UGB habitat.

(C) Project has not reached full maturity but will likely contribute to UGB habitat.

(D) Project enhancement is marginal because of negligence, non-compliance, or incorrectly implementing the project according to contract specifications (human-caused)

(E) Project enhancement is marginal because of unfavorable weather patterns, drought, severe animal depredation (if not fenced), and/or plant pests/disease (natural causes).

(F) Low quality nesting/brood cover planting. Project has reached maturity but fails to provide a beneficial habitat component for UGB (e.g., wolfy, decadent, grass monotype, or otherwise unproductive herbaceous cover).

7) Wildlife use observations (see instructions): _____

8) Other Comments: _____

9) Image log:

- | | | |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| 1. _____; | 6. _____; | 11. _____; |
| 2. _____; | 7. _____; | 12. _____; |
| 3. _____; | 8. _____; | 13. _____; |
| 4. _____; | 9. _____; | 14. _____; |
| 5. _____; | 10. _____; | 15. _____; |

Signature: _____
Monitor

Date: _____

(Eliminate these instructions from the Monitoring form when completed)

Line-by-line Instructions - Habitat Contract Monitoring Form

NOTE: MONITORING VISITS REQUIRE ALL OF THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION BE RECORDED ON FORM

Contract number and **Date Visited** are located in the upper right hand corner of the contract in the shaded box.

1) **Landowner name** is the current owner of the property. May not be the same as the name on the contract. **Phone Number** is the current contact information for acquiring access.

2) **Project Type(s)** is one or more of the following, based on information on the contract: Shelterbelt, Nesting Cover, Nesting Cover Enhancement, Food Plot, Grazing System, Sagebrush Lease.

Note: Only include what is an active (un-expired) part of the contract.

3) **Project site sufficiently signed?** Do likely entry points for hunters have signs? If multiple parcels, does each accessible parcel have at least one sign at points of entry or along public routes? DOES EACH SIGN HAVE APPROPRIATE NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION? If insufficient, add signs with appropriate name/contact information and/or re-write name and contact info on existing signs.

4) **Contract Compliance.** Mark NO or MAYBE based on observations and stipulations in the contract. *Take the time necessary to understand each project and what landowner "compliance" should look like.* Depending on the type of project, see the following monitoring recommendations.

5) **Project-Specific Information.** **For non-grazing system projects:** Pay particular attention to the table of steps in Item 1 and related restrictions in Item 5a in the habitat contract. See also specific instructions by project type:

a. **Shelterbelt** - has the fabric barrier been maintained? If irrigation is supposed to occur, has it? Does the irrigation system look functional? If tillage between rows is supposed to be accomplished, has it?

b. **Nesting cover** - record what, if any, of the seedings have been hayed or grazed. *Mid-contract haying or grazing operations are required by FSA and do not represent non-compliance.*

c. **Nesting Cover Enhancement** - check to see if there is evidence of the treatment being accomplished.

d. **Food plot** - check to see if the site has been seeded and/or left as standing grain

e. **Lease** - check to see if haying or grazing has occurred, and if that complies with contract provisions.

f. **Sagebrush Lease** - landowners in this lease program have agreed not to spray, burn, or plow sagebrush grasslands within the boundaries identified on the contract map. Look for conversion to cropland, substantial areas of dead or burned sagebrush plants, or substantial areas entirely lacking sagebrush due to an apparent treatment.

For grazing systems: (note: grazing systems are typically a 3-treatment rest-rotation system. During a given year, corresponding to the grazing chart in the contract, a pasture will receive 1 of 3 grazing treatments. The 3 treatments are: 1) growing season grazed; 2) post-growing season grazed; 3) year long no grazing or full rest)

- a. Compare the grazing rotation for each pasture to what is detailed in the grazing rotation table for the specific year.
- b. Livestock would typically be moved from the growing season (May-July) pasture to post-growing season in late July or early August, depending on moisture conditions. Drier years may result in earlier rotation dates.
- c. If site visit is prior to late July, 2/3 of the pastures should be ungrazed - see pasture map in grazing contract.
- d. If site visit is after late July, 1/3 of the pastures should be ungrazed - see pasture map.
- e. If site visit is in May or prior to livestock arrival, you will need to assess the prior-year's residual cover. The **prior-year's growing season pasture** should look grazed down with little residual cover, the post growing season pasture should have somewhat better residual cover, and the rest pasture should have un-grazed residual cover with no recent cow pies.

6) Project Quality Evaluation is intended to provide general observations of how the project is functioning. What is estimated survival in **shelterbelt**? Are there particular shrub species that did well or poorly? Are all the **shelterbelt** rows functioning? Does **nesting cover** have good height and density? Is there a lot of bare ground? Are there forbs in the nesting cover such as alfalfa or sweet clover? For **enhanced nesting cover**, does it appear that the treatment resulted in more weedy or forb cover compared to untreated areas? Does the **food plot** have a good stand of planted food? What was planted?

(6a) Overall Project Rating is intended to quantify the overall productivity of the enhancement project. Up to 4 habitat projects can be ranked (e.g., nesting cover, shelterbelts, food plots, and grazing management) per contract, but use extra sheets if necessary. In the **Project rating area**, list specific habitat project followed by the ranking score A, B, C, D, E, or F (see below for ranking definitions). Comments may be added under **Other Comments** (#7) to supplement the ranking score. Select the ranking score that best represents the quality of the project for UGB:

- (A) Project significantly enhances UGB habitat or contributes significantly towards all components necessary for productive UGB habitat.** This rank is for the “hallmark” habitat projects. *Shelterbelts* are generally mature with < 5 to 10% tree mortality and offer excellent cover and food sources. The shelterbelt will show good upkeep and maintenance. *Nesting cover* will be comprised of plant species showing good vigor with desired cover height and diversity. If fenced, the fence will be in good condition. *Grazing systems* managed according to the grazing schedule would likely receive this score. Cooperator maintenance, management, and project upkeep are obvious.
- (B) Project offers fair to moderate UGB habitat.** Projects offer adequate UGB habitat but may require additional enhancement practices to provide highly productive UGB habitat. *Shelterbelts* may require additional shrub planting to fill in dead spots within rows or planting additional rows may significantly improve habitat (i.e., 3-row shelterbelts could be ranked “B”). A portion of *Nesting Cover* may be showing signs of decadence and loss of vigor. Signs of noxious weed invasion are observed.
- (C) Project has not reached full maturity but will likely contribute to UGB habitat.** Projects – such as *Shelterbelts* or *Grazing Systems* – will likely provide productive UGB habitat when mature or implemented for a period of time, respectively. Projects that receive this score will likely have all project components in place yet are too “young” to provide full benefits to UGB (i.e., a 3-year old shelterbelt with

fabric in place and other obvious signs of landowner maintenance; a grazing system in the first 3-year rotation).

- (D) **Project enhancement is marginal because of negligence, non-compliance, or incorrectly implementing the project according to contract specifications (human-caused).** Obvious signs of neglect – such as a deteriorated fence, lack of mulch fabric – and other human-caused events may contribute to a decrease in project enhancement. Rank these projects accordingly. A combined score of “C” and “D” may be appropriate in some cases; mark these projects as “C/D.”
- (E) **Project enhancement is marginal because of unfavorable weather patterns, drought, severe animal depredation (if not fenced), and/or plant pests/disease (natural causes).** Projects may not significantly contribute towards productive UGB habitat because of unforeseen or uncontrollable events. Rank these projects accordingly. A combined score of “C” and “D” may be appropriate in some cases; mark these projects as “C/D.”
- (F) **Low quality nesting/brood cover planting. Project has reached maturity but fails to provide a beneficial habitat component for UGB (i.e, wolfy, decadent, grass monotype, or otherwise unproductive herbaceous cover).** This score is specific to nesting cover.

7) **Wildlife use observations** during the time you were on site, what wildlife did you see using the project area? Upland game bird observations or signs are particularly important such as game birds seen, signs of game birds (droppings, nest, dust bowls, feathers, tracks). This is not intended to be a comprehensive survey, be observant but also realize recorded information is anecdotal.

8) **Other Comments** this can remain blank if no additional information is worthy of recording.

9) **Image log:** for each image, record the number and a *brief* description of what the image portrays. 4-15 images per project, depending on size and complexity of project, should suffice. Take sample pictures that represent the project including project signs, shelterbelt rows, individual shrubs – if possible use reference object to show size, nesting cover and cover understory, food plot, sagebrush, signs of wildlife use, etc. If there are apparent violations, take pictures of these.

10) **Insert Images:** copy images taken on the site into the electronic report form. Minimum photo size is 4 x 5 inches and minimum photo resolution is 460 x 575 pixels.